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THE
VALEDICTORY ADDRESS
OF THE
HON. SAMUEL WALKER, MAYOR,
DELIVERED BEFORE THE
BOARD OF ALDERMEN,
DECEMBER 26TH, 1853.



PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN.

ROXBURY:
NORFOLK COUNTY JOURNAL PRESS,
1853.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, December 26, 1853.

ORDERED, That the Address of His Honor the Mayor, delivered before the Board this evening, be entered at length upon the Journal, and printed for the use of the City Council.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, City Clerk.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, December 26, 1853.

Alderman G. CURTIS offered the following resolves, which were passed unanimously :

Resolved, That the members of this Board, tender their warmest thanks to the Hon. SAMUEL WALKER, for the dignified and impartial manner in which he has presided over the deliberations of the Board, and the satisfactory manner in which he has discharged the other duties incumbent on the office of Mayor.

Resolved, That in retiring from the office of Mayor, we trust that he will no forget that he has still an interest among us, and a duty to perform in advancing the prosperity and welfare of the city, and that as one of its citizens he will ever cherish the good old name of Roxbury.

His Honor the MAYOR responded to the resolves substantially as follows :

GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN:

THE time has nearly arrived when our official relations will be brought to a close, and I should do violence to my own feelings, were I to take leave of you without expressing the obligations I feel to each and all of you for the aid you have rendered me in the discharge of the duties incumbent on my position. I tender to you, gentlemen, my grateful acknowledgements for the kindness and courtesy that you have uniformly extended to me since our official connection. The meetings of the Board, gentlemen, have been pleasant, agreeable and harmonious; and although we may have differed in opinion upon measures and matters brought before us for our action,—which of course must be expected in every deliberate body,—yet no difference of opinion has at any time in the slightest degree interrupted or affected, for a single moment, the happy and agreeable relations that have existed between us. During the time I have been connected with the government, as a member of this

Board, of the Common Council, and as Mayor, my intercourse with my associates has been exceedingly pleasant; and I can bear my testimony to the faithful, efficient, and energetic manner in which those who have been connected with me have discharged their various duties.

Our schools are in a prosperous condition. The Committee under whose supervision they are have never been unmindful of their duties, nor the teachers unfaithful to the trusts committed to their hands. I say it with pride, gentlemen, that our schools are equal to the best in the Commonwealth. Appropriations have always been promptly and cheerfully made by the City Council for their maintenance and support. At this moment we have three grammar, one intermediate, and twenty-eight primary schools, with a corps of fifty-three efficient teachers. Besides these, we have the English High and Latin Schools, organized as two of the public schools, and under the joint management and direction of the Board of Trustees and the School Committee. These two schools are supported chiefly by a fund managed by Trustees, who, by law, are required to see to the disbursement of it; and the city, as you are aware, pays only for their support what the income from the trust funds falls short of doing.

Since the organization of our present form of government, the average cost per year of maintaining our schools—that is, for pay of teachers, fuel, &c.—has been upwards of \$22,500, and in the same period of time we have built two commodious grammar school-houses and nine houses for primary schools, at a cost of nearly \$69,000. These, gentlemen, show us that we have ever been mindful of the cause of education.

The highways, gentlemen, have been greatly improved. All of us can remember their condition a few years since, though at that time they might be equal to those of the neighboring towns. The improvements made are visible. A few years ago we had but very few sidewalks—now we have many, and more are needed. We have laid many miles of edge stones, paved gutters and cross-walks. This

work, I trust, will go on. Improvements of this character, gentlemen, are required, and they will continue to be made, I trust, as the public necessity and convenience require them, by those who succeed in office.

Our police affairs have been well conducted. Perhaps there is nothing connected with the administration of the government so difficult to manage, and make satisfactory to the public, as that of matters pertaining to the police. The officers, in the discharge of their duties, must necessarily encounter opposition, and oftentimes receive censure, when they deserve praise. I have reason to believe that the City Marshal has discharged the duties of his office promptly and efficiently. Good order has been maintained, and the interests of our city have always been protected. I have uniformly found this officer ready, either by day or night, to execute my orders, and the orders of the Board.

Our fire department, gentlemen, is orderly and efficient. No city, I believe can boast of having a better one. My experience here enables me to say, that the officers and members have been prompt at all times in saving the property of our citizens from the devouring element, and my official intercourse with them has been at all times pleasant and agreeable.

In my communication at the commencement of the year, I alluded to the importance of providing more and better light for our streets. As it is well known to you, gentlemen, a Gas Company has recently been organized, and will, as soon as practicable, proceed to the work of erecting the necessary buildings, and laying the pipes through our streets, and will be ready to furnish the people and the city with any amount of light they may desire.

There are other subjects, gentlemen, connected with the history of our affairs, that I should be pleased to allude to; but at this hour of the evening, I should not feel justified in detaining you with details, or in bringing before you the various matters which have received the sanction of the government, and have proved advantageous to the city. The Cemetery at Forest Hills, though opposed at the time

of its purchase by many of our citizens, is now admitted by all to have been one of the wisest acts of the government. The purchase of Brook Farm, was regarded by some as unwise, but results have shown that the number of inmates in the institution, since they have been removed there, has been diminished, and the cost of their support greatly reduced; and the farm, for the two years past, has spoken so well for itself that I need not add a single word in its favor.

Within the last three years our heritage has been divided. A portion of our territory has been set off and incorporated into a new town. However much we regretted this act of separation, and however unwise we believe it to be, it will always give me pleasure, gentlemen, as I know it will you, to learn of the success of the new town of West Roxbury, and the prosperity of its inhabitants; and all of us will be happy should their hopes and expectations be fully realized, for there are those among them who have served with us in the councils of the city, and for whose opinions and good judgment we, in common with our fellow-citizens, always entertained the highest respect; and I trust that the associations formed, and the many pleasant and happy hours we have passed together, may always be remembered by us, and never be forgotten by them.

I cannot retire, gentlemen, without alluding to a subject of grave importance which is now again before the people of this city, upon which they will soon give an expression of opinion. I allude, gentlemen, to the matter of annexation—a matter that affects the interest of 17,000 inhabitants and more than \$13,000,000 of property. In my first communication to the two branches, I stated my views somewhat at length, and have since seen no reason to change them; but on the contrary, observation and experience confirm me stronger in the opinions I then entertained. These opinions are known to you, and to my fellow-citizens. I have never sought to conceal them, and I know of no good reasons why I should conceal them now. A free expression of opinion on matters of high public concern is a right

belonging to every individual in this community, of which he cannot be deprived.

Two years since this subject was fully investigated before a committee of the Legislature, and that committee, after a very laborious and protracted hearing, unanimously gave the petitioners leave to withdraw, and their report was accepted by both branches of the Legislature. The committee say that they “examined with all the care and diligence of which they were capable, during a protracted hearing of the evidence presented before them, both for and against the union of the two cities, and have come to the conclusion that although Boston at some future period may include within her limits not only Roxbury but all the towns and villages within a circuit of four to six miles; when such a union will be sought by the city herself, to make room for her inhabitants and to increase her influence and popularity abroad; but *in the opinion of the committee, the exigency had not yet arrived when it would be advantageous for the citizens of Roxbury to change their municipal relations, or for the County of Norfolk to dissolve its connections with the city of Roxbury. All the wants and difficulties complained of by the petitioners could be as well supplied and remedied without annexation as with it.*”

This, gentlemen, was the result of that investigation. All the reasons offered for annexation were fully and carefully considered. What *new* reasons now exist for that measure I do not profess to know. But I can say for myself, that if ten good reasons existed in favor of it, and ten good reasons against it, I should oppose the measure; and if fifteen good reasons existed in favor of it and ten only against it, I should hesitate even then. It is a safe maxim, gentlemen, “to let well enough alone.”

For two hundred and twenty-three years the people of Roxbury have enjoyed the rights and privileges of self-government; they have, for that period of time, managed their own affairs with their own means and by their own resources; they have always been at peace with their neighbors, and have maintained a high character among the towns of the Commonwealth.

The census reveals to us the fact that we have increased in population and wealth far beyond our neighbors: we gained in ten years 10,006 in population, *or one hundred and twenty and a quarter per cent.* There were only three towns in the Commonwealth that gained so much. These were the towns of Chelsea, Milford and Natick: Brookline gained 109 per cent.; Cambridge, 80 1-2 per cent.; Dorchester, 75 per cent.; Charlestown, including Somerville, 75 per cent.; Boston, 65 1-4 per cent. In valuation, also, our gain has been still greater. With these facts before me, I see that we have much more than kept pace with the towns and cities in our vicinity. With such progress, gentlemen, I feel content, and I am fully convinced that our interests and local affairs can be better protected and advanced by ourselves than entrusted to the management of others.

I cannot conclude, gentlemen, without bearing my testimony to the prompt and faithful manner in which the responsible duties of City Clerk and City Treasurer have been performed. These officers have, by their unvarying kindness, laid me under personal obligations, and it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge how much they have aided me in the performance of my public duties, and to assure them of my respectful consideration.

In retiring from official station to the walks of private life, I can truly say, gentlemen, that many of the happiest hours of my life have been spent in the councils of this city, and I shall often look back upon them with most agreeable recollections, and with emotions of pleasure, and although I may not be connected with the administration of the Government, I shall always feel a deep interest in whatever may tend to promote the welfare of the City and the prosperity of its inhabitants. And my earnest prayer is that happiness and prosperity may ever attend each one of you. And may the Almighty Being, who watches over us, guide and direct you in all your undertakings, and vouchsafe to the people of this city the choicest of His blessings.

